

“The Beginning of the End”

February 3, 2024

Matthew 26:1-16

I. Introduction

Jesus wasn't just a good man who gave humanity some nice mottoes to live by—sayings like “Do to others what you would have them do to you.” (Matt. 7:12) or “Love your neighbor as yourself” (Matt.22:39). He didn't come to the earth to start a new religion—Jesus' sole purpose was to die for the sins of the world. In John 1:29 John the Baptist called Jesus, “the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” Turn to 1 Corinthians 15:1-6. “Of first importance,” the Gospel is the message of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. There is no salvation, no gospel, no biblical Christianity without the cross of Christ—1 Cor. 15:14 says, “If Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith.”

Up to this point, Matthew has been demonstrating, through Jesus' teachings and actions, that Jesus was the One prophesied of in the Old Testament—the Messiah. But now, after Jesus' 3 years of ministry, things were coming to a head. The reason for Jesus' incarnation was at hand—the King was preparing to suffer and die. These last 3 chapters of Matthew form the heart of Matthew's story of Jesus the Messiah. In today's Scripture we see 4 different events that lead up to or point towards Jesus' death. In the first event we see God's plan and Jesus' obedience.

II. 4 Events

A. 1st Event: God's plan and Jesus' Obedience Philippians 2:5-8 says that Jesus had voluntarily limited the use of His godly attributes, but four times in Matthew Jesus predicted His arrest and crucifixion (16:21; 17:22-23; 20:17-19; 26:2). Jesus knew God's plan for Him. He knew the time for His death was only 2 days away and He would be obedient.

Jesus' death wasn't an accident or an untimely death, Jesus knew when and what was going to happen. In John 10:18, speaking of His life, Jesus said, “No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father.” Peter preached at Pentecost in Acts 2:23: Jesus “was handed over to you by God's set purpose

and foreknowledge.” This was the reason Jesus came to the earth—from before the beginning of time, Jesus was to die for the world. And the appropriate time for Jesus to die was at Passover when the sacrificial lambs were slain. As Philip explained to the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8:26-35, Jesus was the Lamb predicted by Isaiah, who was led to slaughter but didn’t open His mouth in protest. Jesus knew and was obedient to God’s will—as He prayed in Matthew 26:39, “Yet not as I will, but as you will.”

B. 2nd Event: The plotting leaders of Israel At the same time that Jesus was predicting his crucifixion, the 2nd event was occurring: the plotting of the leaders of Israel. Matthew wrote, “The chief priests and the elders of the people” were plotting Jesus’ arrest. The chief priests, led by the high priest Caiaphas, represented the wealthy and influential *religious* leaders. The elders represented the wealthy and influential *political* leaders of the Jewish nation. Together these men represented the leadership of Israel.

The high priest Caiaphas was driven by greed, selfishness, and jealousy. He had no regard for his country, his people, or his religion except how they could be used for his own personal advantage. He wanted to destroy Jesus because he feared that Jesus was a threat to his position and power over the Jewish people. With that in mind, Caiaphas gathered the leaders gathered in his house to plot how they could arrest and kill Jesus.

They had all taken more from Jesus than they could tolerate. But they were afraid to arrest Him openly. From the response on Palm Sunday, it was obvious that Jesus was very popular with the mass of people who had gathered in Jerusalem for the annual celebration of Passover. From the leaders’ viewpoint, Passover was the worst possible time for them to take action against Jesus. Since many from the uncouth masses felt that Jesus was the promised Messiah, to arrest Him and then put Him to death would lead to a major uprising and their fall from power. So, the plan was to wait until after Passover, but Passover was the time God had chosen and contrary to their plans, Jesus would be crucified in 2 days not 8 days.

C. 3rd Event: Jesus’ anointing at Bethany For the 3rd event leading up to Jesus’ death, Matthew presented a flashback to the previous Saturday evening: Jesus’ anointing at Bethany. Turn to John 12:1-8. The anointing by Mary took place “6 days before Passover” in the house of Simon the leper. Since lepers

were not allowed to live in town or to associate with nonlepers, Simon must have been healed. Most likely he had been healed miraculously by Jesus and Simon had invited Jesus and others to his house for a meal.

John wrote that this woman was Mary. this very expensive perfume was worth about a year's wages; [Mark 14:1-11](#) adds that the expensive alabaster jar it was in was also broken. Mary's act was very costly. She had always been very attentive to Jesus' teachings. From her actions, it seems that she accepted and understood Jesus' prophecies of His imminent death better than the 12 did. Unlike the disciples, who were still fighting about who was number 1, she was not caught up in the selfish desire for Christ to establish His earthly kingdom so that she could share in the glory and privilege of that event.

In love, Mary anointed both His head and His feet and wiped His feet with her hair. She willfully surrendered her glory and her dignity to worship and glorify Jesus with the precious gift she brought. She didn't seek a visible or some kind of tangible reward for her generosity but offered her most expensive earthly possession to the Lord in an act of adoring worship. Although she didn't know it at the time, instead of anointing His body after His death, she did so before His death. What she did was an act of faith and love.

Since the rest of the disciples didn't know of the true character of Judas and since his criticism of Mary sounded so spiritual, they joined him in attacking her. The disciples didn't know the real reason for his attack until later—Judas wanted the ointment sold so that the money would go into the common purse and then he would be able to use it for himself. Mark wrote that, following Judas' lead, the disciples “[rebuked her harshly](#)” ([Mark 14:5](#)).

Being aware of this, Jesus rebuked them and praised Mary. Jesus didn't criticize the disciples because they were concerned for the poor. He was concerned about the poor. He was cautioning them against missing their opportunity to worship Him. They would always have opportunities to help the poor. But they would not always have the opportunity to worship at His feet and prepare Him for burial.

Genuine worship is the supreme service a Christian can offer to Jesus Christ. There is a time for ministering to the hungry, the sick, the naked, and the imprisoned. There is a time for witnessing to the lost and seeking and helping them grow in the faith. There is a time for careful study and teaching God's Word.

But the thing above all else that the Lord requires of His people is their true worship. As Jesus said in [Matthew 22:37](#) the greatest commandment is to “**Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.**” Without this, everything else we do in His name is empty and worthless.

Like Mary, the true worshipper of Jesus doesn’t ask, “*How much is it going to cost me?*” or, “*Do I have time?*” The true worshipper gives Jesus all that he has, knowing it is nothing compared to what Jesus has given him. We need to offer Him our most valuable possessions—He gave His all for us. No gift is too great in response to His divine love.

D. 4th Event: Judas’ planned betrayal The 4th event was Judas’ planned betrayal. Compared to Mary’s demonstration of love and worship, this act was one of hypocrisy and the lowest shame. As one of the Twelve, Judas had seen and experienced the powers of God. He himself had received the power to heal when he, along with the rest of the disciples, had gone out on their missionary journeys. But in spite of all he had seen and heard, Judas was not a true believer. Like many professing Christians today, Judas was “*in*” the group of believers but not “*of*” them ([1 John 2:19](#)).

Many reasons have been suggested as to why Judas would seek to betray Jesus: love of money or greed, jealousy of the other disciples, disappointment with the direction Jesus’ ministry was going, or perhaps he was just trying to force Jesus’ hand and get Him to move faster. The tragedy of Judas is that he thought he knew better than God. We may not be able to understand why Judas did what he did, but Jesus never gave up on him. Even in the Upper Room on the night He was betrayed, Jesus warned Judas as He washed Judas’ feet along with the other disciples’ feet ([John 13:1-11](#)). But Judas refused and turned against Jesus and allowed himself to be used by Satan. Going to the chief priests, probably while they were still meeting in Caiaphas’ house, Judas asked, “**What are you willing to give me if I hand him over to you?**”

Imagine the surprise and amazement of the religious leaders at Judas’ offer to aid them in destroying Jesus. For the cost of a slave ([Exodus 21:32](#)), Judas sold out his teacher and his leader and his friend. For 30 pieces of silver Judas betrayed the Son of God who had come to die for him.

III. Conclusion

A. Mary's Response In today's Scripture we see 2 different attitudes towards Jesus—the response of a true follower of Jesus and the response of a fake or a hypocrite. First, there's Mary's response: she gave her best in worshipping her Lord and Savior. She gave all she had. The perfume was just a symbol of giving herself completely and totally to the Lord and He accepted it. As one commentator wrote, *“Nothing given to Jesus in love is ever wasted.”*

Have you ever noticed that every time Mary tried to do something for Jesus, she was misunderstood? Her sister Martha misunderstood her when Mary sat at Jesus' feet to hear Him teach ([Luke 10:38-42](#)). Her friends and neighbors misunderstood her when she came out of the house to meet Jesus after Lazarus had been buried ([John 11:28-32](#)). Judas and the other disciples misunderstood her when she anointed Jesus. When we give Jesus Christ first place in our lives, we can expect to be misunderstood and criticized by those who claim to follow Him as well as those who don't know Him. But like Mary, we need to continue serving and worshiping, despite any criticism. Like Mary, we need to give our all-in spite of what others might say.

B. Judas' Response Then there's Judas. Judas' life is a warning to those who pretend to serve God but whose hearts are far from God. He is also a warning to those who waste their opportunities and their lives. *“Why this waste?”* asked Judas when he saw the expensive perfume poured out on Jesus. Judas' response was to waste his opportunities, his life, and, finally, his soul!

So, what about you? Have you, like Judas, fooled everyone into thinking that you belong to Jesus—that you are a Christian? Like everyone else, someday you are going to stand before God and answer the question, *“What did you do with Jesus?”* God is going to look at your heart and not just your actions. Accept Jesus' sacrifice for your life, give Jesus the best thing that you have—yourself—and watch what He will give you in return! If, on the other hand, you have made Jesus your Lord and Savior—what kind of worship do you offer God? Are you like Mary—do you give Him your best—your first fruits—or do you give Him your leftovers? When you consider what Jesus has done for you, what is the reasonable response? What is your response?

Communion Devotion - February, 2024

Mark 14:12-26

Valentine's Day is next week. It is a time to tell and perhaps show those that you love that you really care for them. This shouldn't be the only time you say, "I love you." But it is just a special time to do so. Like Valentine's Day, the Lord's Table is a special time to think about the love God has for you. It is a time set aside for those who have accepted God's gift to say, "Thank you. I love You." If you have accepted Jesus as your Lord and Savior, whether or not you are a member of TBC, we invite you to join us as we take time to think of and to celebrate God's love, mercy, and grace—not just what happened in the past but what He has promised about the future.

Suppose Linda were to give me an extravagant gift for Valentine's Day, what should be my reasonable response? What should I give her in return? How would she feel—for that matter, what would you think—if I refused this gift that demonstrated her love for me? Now apply this thought to God and His love. What kind of gift has God given you? *Jesus willingly gave His life as a sacrifice in your place so that you might have eternal life.* What is your reasonable response? How do you think God feels if you refuse His extravagant gift?

This morning as we remember Jesus' sacrifice, take time to look at what you have given God in return. Many of you trust verses like [Romans 10:9](#) that says "that if you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." But have you, like Mary, given all you have to Him? Is He really your Savior and Lord? This morning as the bread and the juice are being passed, take inventory of your heart—who is your Savior? Who is your Lord? If something has come between you and God, get rid of it this morning. Then come with a pure heart and worship Him at the Lord's table.

If, on the other hand, you have never accepted God's gift—Jesus' gift—then this table isn't for you. You can't say thank you to God for His gift—you have refused it. If this describes you, why not make today a special day? Why don't you accept Jesus' gift of eternal life and the peace God's promises about life after death today? In the quiet time while the elements are being passed, give your life to Jesus; make Him your Lord and Savior.